

Funding Threatened for North Carolina's Public Schools

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The progress of North Carolina's PreK-12 public schools is threatened by decreased funding. The biennial budget for 2009-11 cut funding for the state's public schools by 12%. Now the members of the N.C. General Assembly will be considering even steeper cuts when they return on May 12.

Why is cutting the public schools' budget a problem?

Everyone has to cut in these hard times.

- 1) N.C. public schools' biennial budget was cut by 12% for 2009-11. Additional cuts under consideration bring the total amount of public school cuts to \$1.2 billion, a 16% decrease in support from N.C.'s General Fund for 2010-11 when compared with 2008-09.
- 2) Federal stimulus funds, which partially filled the 2009-10 state budget shortfall, decrease and end in 2010-11.
- 3) Educational needs are growing, not declining.

What would a \$1.2 billion cut mean?

The N.C. General Assembly sets funding levels and restrictions in its budget each year. In addition, there are state and federal laws and allotment formulas that must be followed. It is up to the local school district leadership to determine what cuts will be made in response to state funding while remaining in compliance with state and federal mandates. More information on the budget is available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/>.

Here are some examples of cuts and their dollar value:

- Eliminating all principals and assistant principals would cut \$324 million, or 4.27%, of the total budget in 2009-10.
- Eliminating all central office administrative personnel would cut \$107 million, or 1.41%, of the total budget.
- Eliminating all N.C. Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) personnel would cut \$42 million, or 0.57%, of the total budget.
- Eliminating 20,000 classroom teacher positions or a 6.8% pay cut for each public school employee would cut \$1 billion.

Can't the budget be cut without cutting teachers?

The largest chunk of N.C.'s Public School Fund, 60%, goes for teachers. (51.38% are budgeted positions and other positions are funded through At-Risk, Children With Disabilities, Limited English Proficient, Low Wealth, Small County, and other line items.) Teachers, teacher assistants, and instructional support personnel make up 74.8% of all personnel. It's hard to avoid cutting people since 91% of the budget goes to salaries and benefits.

In 2009-10, North Carolina's public schools lost 16,253 state-paid positions, 11.2% of its work force. Cuts included:

- 4,701 classroom teachers, -5.4%;
- 197 school building administrators, -4.7%;
- 522 instructional support personnel (counselors, media specialists, social workers, school nurses, etc.), -4.9%;
- 36 central office personnel, -3.4%;
- 3,775 teacher assistants, -16.8%;
- 3,013 clerical personnel, -47.9%; and
- 4,009 other non-certified positions (bus drivers, cafeteria workers, janitors, etc.), -29.3%.